1:Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934
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Saramacca

484 through them, would have meant courting the displeasure of the spirit which animated the troubled stretch, and would have been dangerous. He was a Man Nengere and knew all this well, for was he not ready to marry Dida any 582 time now? He would have to wait as yet, but perhaps [856] during the next planting her breasts would come, and then in a month, two, three, she would be ready to marry. He was, in fact, in the mood even to cast about for a second wife, though his marrying her would have to wait many years. All that would come, for what with the money he already had earned, and the sums he would get for the wood he might bring down the river later, and this money the Bakra would give him, he would have enough to pay for the hammock, the cloth pangi, the handkerchiefs, the [584] bracelets and beads, and whatever else a man needed to give to his woman and her mother for a fine marriage.

484 Going through this stretch of still water, which Bayo always found dull, he thought of this and that, for there was no work for his muscles but the monotony of the dip and stroke of the paddle. Going upstream it was different. There the challenge of the slipping pole-stick against submerged slime-covered rocks made a man prove himself. It spoke to the warrior blood in him, which found no outlet in these quiet times. But this was only idling, and his mind found pleasure in wandering, especially if it happened, as now, to be dark enough to make it worthless for him to look about for the things that grew and stirred in the bush.

Yes, it would be almost three hours before the sun was high, and when it stood there—he indicated the place in the heavens to himself with his eye—he might be loading the Bakra's boats to go up river, for word had come from top-side that the Mamadam would be safe in a few days, and now if the Granman meant for the Bakra to get to the upper river, he would be sending word down almost any time. And he, Bayo, was ready for the journey. 484 Here in the blue canister, which he had bought in the city 574 on the Queen's last birthday with part of the money he had

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KUNU

We sat one night talking about the neku vine, which is used to poison the streams for fishing, and the ceremonies attending the discovery of a new one, how the ownership of it is passed on in the female line, and about the songs which are sung to celebrate the finding, and the feast which is given at this time.

"Do you use this poison only to catch fish, or does it have other uses?" we asked guardedly.

"Well, sometimes people use it to commit suicide," one man said. "That is bad. Sometimes a man or a woman will do it to put a kunu on another's family." He went on to tell of a man who lately did this. He had been promised the daughter of a family in this very village when the girl was a small, small child. It happened that the girl's uncles found gold in one of the streams, for which the white man gave them much goods, and now they were big men. Since the girl's children would inherit much wealth, they wanted her to be the principal wife of a man of rank. There were messages back and forth, and council meetings, but the uncles insisted that the girl return the gifts she had received —insisted against the advice of many people. So this *kio*, this young lad, could get his revenge in no other way than by taking his own life, and sending a kunu to the family.

"The next time you come you will probably see the kunu at work. It is always so. Of what use is wealth when the children begin to die? One year the crops are bad, and you have to buy food. One year you go from one obia man to the next to find out why your sister cannot make children. Your money goes. Kunu is a bad thing."

Another day a woman came to us with a comb to sell. She had heard that we were gathering pieces to put into a large house where carvings from Africa were being shown, and she wanted us to have this comb of hers which was made as a betrothal gift by her husband who was now many years dead. It was an old comb with several broken tines and holes bored into it by insects, but the decorated end was still very beautiful, and we were eager to buy it. When we asked her to explain to us the meaning of the design, she

1: Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934
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THE PROVISION GROUND

It is the woman's task, then, to see to the food which the Earth Mother yields, while the men are busy hauling lumber and making boats, hunting and fishing, and carrying the white man's loads to the city. In the leisure of the rainy season, while the women cut up the trade cotton cloth into long, narrow strips and sew them into cloths of traditional design, the men are at work carving fine things out of wood.

When the big rains come a man might busy himself carving doorposts for his new house, or he might make a paddle to put away in his personal treasure house, so that, when he is ready to take a second wife, he might have the proper gifts to make her. Another might be making a small canoe paddle for his first daughter. She is four, perhaps, and already is of help to her mother in the field, carrying water from the river in a small Indian jar. Soon she will be strong enough to have the cutting of the kamemba begin—a few slashes about the navel at first . . . He will cover the surface of the paddle with beautiful traceries, each design a meaningful symbol, and to add to its beauty he will darken it with a mixture of oil and charred rice hulls. When it is finished it will be of a reddish-brown color, slender, and smooth to the touch of his fingers as the skin of his woman-child. Combs, food stirrers, trays, stools, peanut pounding boards, and, if a man likes, mortar and pestle—all these are carved when the rains are heavy and there is no work to be done on the river or in the bush.

So the work is divided. A man does a man's work—wood, iron, hunting the game animals of the bush, and catching fish in traps, making baskets of wood fiber—all that is a man's affair he does. And the woman, tending the fields and cooking for her family, pounding palm nuts in her mortar to make palm oil, grating the bitter cassava to make flour free from the poison that is in the roots, caring for her house and carving calabash dishes with the symbols of men and women and fertility—woman does what it is woman's lot to do.

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84 It appeared that nothing in a woman's life was so dreaded
85 as childbearing, nothing more coveted than fertility, and no time so difficult and so anxious as when a woman was rearing her children.

787 "The day before a girl marries she prays all day to her
● 584 gods," said Dida, who with Fenekonde and several other women had joined us. "I begged my god Kesekia and gave him rice and rum. All day they played the agida. I begged
[849] him not to hate my husband. I begged him to give us children."

843 When a woman conceived, her husband made her many
[831] obias, and especially a black sack obia with four cowries
751 sewed on it, to keep her safe on the paths which led from
789 village to village, and from village to her field. The fear of the power of bad magic at this time was so great that, if we but looked at one of the pregnant women, or let our eyes rest on the several obias she wore, she grew nervous, covered them with both her hands, and disappeared in fear that the very power of our glance might weaken the potency of the charms. She did not believe in the white man's magic, but she was not in a condition to wish to put it to a test.

844 "When her time comes, a woman sees to it that she is in
782 her own village," said Fenekonde. "It is not good to give birth in the bush, or on the river."

This had almost happened to Wilhelmina with her last child. She was on the river alone in a boat. Chief Sungi of Dahomey met her and called on his gods to delay the coming of the child until he brought her home. He had strong obia, and so the misfortune was averted.

When the woman felt the first labor-pains, she prayed to the gods, and to her personal spirits. On the great Sky God she called, and the Earth Mother; on her ak'a, her soul; on the Yorka, the ancestors; and then she prayed to her personal gods, and particularly to whatever snake gods she might have, for some of these were known to be jealous of a coming child. But none of the gods dared be slighted.

1: Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934
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society, the "Congo" sticks, as they were called here, or the "fighting" sticks. 532

The carvings, however, which we were admiring in the house of the captain of Ma'lobbi were for secular use. The Bush Negro craftsman brought to the ornamenting of his paddles and his canoe seats, to his house posts, and particularly to the door of his treasure house, to his women's combs, and trays, and food stirrers, and clothes beaters all the traditional skill and patience. But the exceptional carver brought also the cunning in his fingers which his gods had given to him and only to few others on the river. Such a man was the captain of Ma'lobbi. Into the traditional designs such a man wove lines for the love of seeing them grow under his hand, for there were always single motifs which the people versed in the symbolism of the art would describe as "beautiful," as having no meaning. Yet with few exceptions the massing of outlines in a unified design bore on fertility. Men and women alone or together, and male and female animals were represented in all but occasional pieces. [501]

The Bush Negro artist was a man of consequence on the river. His companions admired his skill, and the young women were proud to have his handiwork. If he showed his gifts early, he was at an advantage in courting a girl of an influential family. The girl's mother, who shared in the gifts of her daughter's suitor, might be willing to overlook other less advantageous traits in the man or in his family, while the girl's uncles would not be loath to have such a man in their family to teach his art to his sons, who would be their successors. 532 554 584

On several occasions we were permitted to see how very deeply this appreciation of fine carving went. As in the instance of the paddle we had acquired from the wife of the captain of Ma'lobbi, it had happened often that the consent of the woman to sell a given piece was necessary before any trading could take place. Sometimes we traded directly with the woman, sometimes she asked her husband, or her brother, or her son, as the more worldly 432 562 439

1: Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934
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BAYO, THE PLAYBOY

"Will Bayo be married before we leave the bush?" we asked, telling her that only a short time would see us returning to our own country.

We had often talked of marriage with Bayo on our trip up river and had offered to make up what he lacked in gifts and money that we might witness the festivities of marriage. He had, of course, promised to have matters arranged.

Bayo's aunt laughed, however, when she heard the question, and turned to the other woman who was with us in the dimly lighted hut.

"Did you hear what the white man asks?" she called out to her companion. "White man, let me tell you something. Bayo is a long way from marrying yet. Why, his girl's breasts haven't begun to come yet!"

It seemed that Bayo had also to see to many things before he could marry. He had not yet cut the field for his mother-in-law, nor had he made any of the carvings which he needed to give his betrothed and her mother, for Bayo was a poor carver.

"Bayo has cunning in his eyes, and his head, but his fingers have no cunning, Bak'a. . . . But you know this, Bayo is strong."

Her train of thought turned at the last phrase to our journey up river. Had we traveled well with Bayo? Had he got on with the other men? Awa, she knew that people liked him. It was the obia he had, and his own gods, but his gods were bad, too.

"When he was in his mother's womb, he troubled her much. He tore at her. Ai, she had no happy time of it with Bayo."

We remembered the incest kunu in Bayo's family, which lay in wait for all its members, killing off one by one until the line was wiped out. We ventured a cautious question.

"You are the sister of Bayo's mother?"

The answer, however, did not take us to kunu, but rather to the iron on her arm.

"Ai, and of his father who is now dead. In our family we have strong gods. It is these that have come to Bayo. . . ."

1:Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934
[illegible] Bush Negroes [illegible]
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him, and what he could get on the Marowyne in a year, it would be possible for him to see to it that his betrothed had all the gifts that a man of position gave to his woman. There were, too, other things to bear in mind. Already he had seen a girl who would make a desirable second wife, but that would require still more money.

"But, Bayo," we interposed, "we saw your mother at Djamungo. She told us your girl will not be ready for marrying for some time."

"Did she say that? Did she tell you that I am still a child?"

"What's the matter, Bayo? Don't you like her?"

"Awa, I like her. Not too much. She likes to talk."

We thought it politic to give the subject a new turn. Close beside Bayo lay the dog that had accompanied him the first time he came to us here, before our journey up the river. His was a curious color, a faint pinkish hue which puzzled us.

"What is the color of your dog, Bayo?"

"He is white when he does not have obia on him. He is a hunting dog. Tross is his name. He will stay with me. The obia comes off when he goes into the river."

We laughed. "Does Tross hunt in the river, Bayo?"

"No. In the bush. But if I leave him behind, he swims out to my canoe."

Tross was to become better known to us as the days went on. He had a great affection for his master, and this feeling extended to all those who appertained to Bayo. After Bayo had attached himself to our camp, we, too, came under the aura of his dog's regard, though this may have been made the more reasonable by the fact that the netting of the mosquito guards of our hammocks appealed to Tross as a comfortable place to spend the night. He was a good watchdog, and sometimes we were awakened by his low growl, and a voice saying "*Cha!*—Be quiet!" Just now we were interested in the cord about his neck, and we asked Bayo about it.

"It is more obia. It is strong, too. Nothing happens to Tross when he goes in the bush. You will see."

REBEL DESTINY

115 Bayo knew the bush as he knew the river. At one point
• 584 he stopped and, clipping off a long, slender branch with
his bush knife, he trimmed it and began to strike at a palm
[349] tree. He was after maripa nuts, and soon they began to
pelt the ground. Their pink, slightly astringent meat was
highly prized by the Bush Negroes as a delicacy, and the
white man also found them good. Both munched them
as they walked farther into the bush. It was a good time
to speak of Bayo's marriage.

"Your mother said you needed to work hard before marrying."

"Ai."

"Is it money you need?"

"Much money, and goods besides."

"What will your girl do with all this money, and all of these goods?"

"They are not all for her. She would have me without them. It is her mother who must get things, too."

That Bayo was attractive to women, we had often seen, but that his betrothed would have him without the wealth demanded for her by right of whatever position her family held, seemed doubtful. However, this was not the time to argue the point.

"Your girl is still young. Do girls her age know enough to choose a man?"

The question brought us to the story of how Bayo became betrothed.

His girl, he told us, was of good family. She had lived in his village, because her mother at marriage had come to live with her husband at Djamunga, but a few years after Bayo had become betrothed to the girl, his mother's sister took her away to the family seat up the river.

"Do you care for your girl, Bayo?"

"*M'en tabi, Bak'o*—I do not know. We shall see how we
[331] get on. But her family is good, and they are looking after
her chastity, as families who have position do."

"What if you don't get on after you are married?"

586 "We will separate. She will go back to her own family. Sometimes, if a man doesn't like a woman too much, and

1: Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1929-1930) 1934
[illegible] Bush Negroes [illegible]
Saramacca

she doesn't make children, then he can send her back. But most often it is the woman who goes away."

When the wife left the home her husband had built for her and went to her family, he had to go to her village and plead for her return, while her relations berated him soundly for his behavior toward their kin. If he had not mistreated her badly, the family would urge her to return to him, and so great would that pressure be that she would have to go. But Bayo again repeated that this did not happen often. If a woman left her husband and he failed to come for her, they were divorced. She could not remarry until three months had passed.

But Bayo was more interested in marriage than in divorce, and the talk again turned to his betrothal.

His mother and her brothers had decided upon the match. His uncles had gone to the family of the girl, and talked with her mother's brothers. Her people called a family kutu to decide whether Bayo was qualified to be a suitable husband for this young member of their family.

"Were you there?"

"No. It was a kutu of her family. But I know how they talk at these kutu, for when my sister was promised in marriage my own family had a kutu, and I sat and listened. Anybody who knew anything bad about my brother-in-law or his family told of it. They talk much at these kutu. The woman you met at Djamango talked when the men talked, and she talked when the women talked," he finished with a laugh, as though it were a relief to him to know that at least she had had no say when his girl's family had gathered to look into his own family position, and his personal habits of work, and the gifts the gods had given him.

At this kutu of the girl's family, Bayo had, however, been thoroughly discussed. Was he a good worker? Could he hunt well? How did he behave in strange villages? At his initiation had the gods come strong to him? Had he done anything that his wife's family would later be ashamed of?

The white man wondered about the kunu which hung over Bayo's family, the kunu of incest, the deadliest of all

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kunu, which must kill his children. Was it safe to mention it? A chance question was asked.

"Nothing will happen to my children, Bak'a. They will belong to my wife's family. It is my sister's children that things will happen to."

Bayo paused for a moment on the path, and stood in thought. Was it that he wished to be entirely honest with his friend? Was it that to confess the truth was too difficult for him? Whatever the reason, his next remark indicated a compromise.

"Nothing will happen to my children. Those of my younger brother will die, but not mine."

The conversation came back to the less painful subject of betrothal. Whatever the reason for accepting this boy whose kunu brought such supernatural risk, the match had apparently been satisfactory to the family of the girl, and they had sent word that the marriage would not displease them.

"Now I am earning the money I need, and later I will make the things I must give my girl and her family."

There was, first of all, the work to be done for Bayo's prospective mother-in-law. He might have to help her with repairs on her house, or assist her in clearing a field. Before he was married he would have to go into the bush and cut the two fields for his wife, one for rice and one for cassava, which a married woman must have, and in addition he would have to cut an extra field for the mother of his wife.

"I must do it so they can be sure that I am strong, and can take care of their girl when I marry her. But I will not have any trouble!"

Before that, however, Bayo would have to see to the carvings which a man had to have for marrying.

"I do not like to carve. But I have friends who will carve for me while I go hunting for them!" That was the way to solve such difficulties. When the carvings were assembled he would have to make a boat for his girl. Bayo was not yet certain, but he thought that another boat would have to be made for his mother-in-law. Then

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houses would have to be built—one in his village where they would live, and one in the provision ground for his wife to sleep in when she worked in the field.

"Must you yourself build the house, Bayo?"

"My family will help me. Making a house is hard work, too, and a man must have clever fingers for weaving the walls."

There would have to be stools, and several well-ornamented combs. A clothes beater would have to be provided for the bride, and a peanut pounding board, and one mortar and pestle at least, and food stirrers and rice trays. A cassava squeezer would have to be woven, and a sifter and grater for the roots that were made into bread. And baskets, too, he would have to weave.

"This is not all. This is only what I must make. Other things I must buy for her."

He would have to provide cloths when the wedding day came, and cloths for his mother-in-law, too. The small kerchiefs which were folded in triangular shape and were worn about the waist as the sign that a woman was married he would also have to furnish, and two large cloths, each the size of three tunics. He would have to buy an iron cooking pot, and some small fishhooks with lines, and some cups from the white man's city. He was going to give his girl a pair of earrings, and a string of beads. Then there would have to be the hammock.

Bayo laughed, "For a marriage, there must be a hammock."

There were other things he was going to buy for his girl. Brass arm and leg ornaments he would buy, since his girl was already a fine dancer.

And when all these things were bought and given, then it was time for the marriage.

"But it doesn't always happen that the marriage takes place," said Bayo. "Sometimes the girl's people do not like what the man has done. They have another krutu, and decide the man should not marry into their family."

584 This was a disgrace. A man was not looked upon as a good suitor by other girls when this happened to him. Everyone said he was worthless. It often came to pass that such a man could not get a woman to marry him. Not even a widow whose husband had left no brothers, and who had to cut her own field, would consent to live with him.

[587]

Sometimes it happened, too, that the man's family did not approve of the girl. When she came to help his mother, they saw that she was lazy and inept, that she would never be able to feed herself and her husband and her children with what crops she raised, that whatever handiwork she touched, she could achieve nothing pleasing. If that happened, then his family met in krutu, and a decision was reached to break off the match. When that was done, the man often had to forfeit the gifts he had made the girl and her mother, but when the woman's family turned the man down, then they came with all the gifts he had given, and often an additional offering as well for what labor he had done for her family.

"With me it is not so. My family likes my girl, and hers likes me."

585 When the gifts were accumulated and the houses and boats and fields provided, then, if the girl was ripe for marrying, the marriage day was set, and on that day the girl was brought to the house where she would live. Both families were gathered in the village, and the uncles and old women addressed themselves to the young couple, admonishing them to live well together, and to observe the traditional ways.

[262]

At night while the villagers danced bandambe, and feasted on the rum and salt beef and other delicacies which the man and his family had provided, the couple were led to the house which had been newly built for them, though sometimes they were taken to the house of one of the old people of the man's great family. In Bayo's village, the girl first was conducted to the house by a sister who helped her make the preparations for the night. They tied the hammock and then water was brought. This done, the man

2:Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
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It is indulged in as naturally as the other bodily functions.

"Marriage" is a convenient term for describing cohabitation among the Djukas, but it must be remembered that to them marriage is a purely economic institution. There is little ceremony. No one objects to getting married, because divorce is instantaneous and easy. The bonds of marriage are loose, and adultery, to use our harsh term, is customary.

Courting consists in presenting the prospective bride with elaborate wood carvings of useful implements. This wood carving has been developed by the Djukas to a high point of artistic perfection, as can be seen from the illustrative specimens, of which more will be said later. The approaching marriage is not looked upon as a departure from the maternal group; it is simply an arrangement for providing the man with a cook and the woman with children. The marriage of a captain or a Granman differs in no wise from any other; no especial care is taken of his bride.

We encountered two varieties of the process of choosing a husband. In the first, the girl has little to say, her husband being selected for her by her parents. In the second and more frequent practice the woman marries the man of her own choice, the parents making sure that the intended husband is a good provider. But since every Djuka buck is trained to the jungle crafts from childhood, this requirement can almost be taken for granted.

The husband marries frequently. He may marry outside of his village, or outside of his lo, but never outside of the tribe. Marriage requires a bride price, consisting of pieces of

2:Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
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881 have a last look at the child's penis, as they will never see it again. Then the boy is proclaimed a man, and given clothes.

So far as could be observed, there is no circumcision of either the male or female, although such mutilations are indulged in by West African tribes in the region from which the Djukas came. The girls wear only the *coyo*, or a larger cloth known as *pangi*, until their first menstruation, when their mothers give them cloths. This is done in private. Menstruating women are required to leave their homes and retire
841 to a separate hut situated outside the village on a by-path; they may not return until three days after the period is over. Under no condition are they allowed to go to the provision fields during this time.

584 At the age of about sixteen or seventeen the children are
[582] ready to be married. Sometimes they are betrothed in infancy, and occasionally a pregnant woman will betroth her child before it is born, conditionally, of course, upon its sex. Once the child is betrothed the ceremony must take place,
[754] otherwise the disappointed prospective mate will call down a *kunu*, or curse, on the entire perjured family, and they will all die. The pubescent child does not look forward to mar-
[581] riage as time for leaving its family, nor is marriage an
[548] initiation into sex relations. For these two reasons, getting married is not a serious step, and there is little illegitimacy because there is no reason for objecting to a marriage.

858 Youths must remain standing until their elders invite them
576 to be seated. It is customary for older people to receive much
888 respectful attention, for the older people are the sources of tradition and authority

/13 cont./
796 committed. This feast, at which pigs and poultry are sacrificed,
[782] must last for four weeks and thus ends with the following new moon. They pray, dancing and singing, while from time to time they kneel in order to ask for blessings.

[778] In the place where their idol stands they plant long sticks in the ground at certain intervals, on which they let flutter a number of long narrow strips of white cotton in the manner of flags.

[781] They celebrate this feast, for which no costs are spared, with all possible solemnity; it is attended by old and young and is very important among them.

Chapter IX

Conceptions about Death and Eternity

775 They believe that at death the existence of the human being ends, but that the spirit of the deceased does not disappear altogether and remains among them for a long time. Also they believe in unlucky spirits, which, as a result of an earlier evil life, must wander about restlessly, while the life on earth of the peaceful spirits is supposed to have been free of misdeeds.

They do not assume rewards in the hereafter for good deeds; /14/ misdeeds, however, in their opinion, are punished with restless wandering about.

[755] They say that those spirits know all that happens, and that they can come in contact with them at their feasts, that they receive many a hint and information, and through concealed signs come to know remedies against diseases, to which they attach the fullest confidence.

Chapter X

Marriage and Marital Life

• 584 Their marriages take place with few ceremonies. Frequently young men and even men ask pregnant women, in case they should bring a daughter into the world, to designate that girl as their wife,

/14 cont./

584 and, once this has been promised, she does indeed continue to be regarded specifically as the betrothed of the person who made the request. As soon as she is marriageable, she is handed over to her man with or without her consent, and it may be regarded as a rare case when such a promise is broken.

[431] The man to whom she is promised sometimes does not see his future wife before the occasion of her betrothal, but usually he is concerned with her upbringing and from time to time gives her presents consisting of money, pantjes, and corals.

[591] Some take the girl promised to them even when she is only three or four years old in order to rear her further.

[672] [682] The promising of newborn girls takes place for the most part when there are obligations between parents, as was reported in Chapter III, and in the case of enslavement which is done to one [567] family by another in case of poisoning and so forth.

586 It is an everyday occurrence that a woman leaves her husband or a man his wife for another.

595 Polygyny is much practiced, and among my workers I know several who have three or four wives, most of whom are very young. Some, however, have only one wife.

It is noteworthy that all the wives sleep with the man in one hut, while in addition he perhaps keeps with him a girl whom he [513] is bringing up to be his wife. One wife will be /15/ with him in the hammock and lies with her feet at the head end of the man and the latter in turn with his feet at the head end of the women, while the other women sleep in their hammocks.

[484] If a Bush Negro goes out, be it to celebrate a festival or in order to float wood to the town, he takes all his wives with him; only in case of illness do they remain behind.

His wives get money separately, and therefore they must also separately provide for his food, so that one cooks the food in the morning, another at midday, a third in the evening, etc. [578] This way of life and their jealous nature frequently bring about household quarrels that rarely end in any way other than bloody fights.

585 Upon the conclusion of a marriage the man is obligated to 583 give the parents of the girl as a marriage portion a long, broad,

/126 cont./

65] The only case in which custom governs the choice of
553 name is that of twins.

Male twins are called Adam and Agosu.

Boy and girl twins are called Adam and Efa (2).

[177]

2. This is connected with a myth derived from the Biblical tradition, which we shall set forth later.

Female twins are called Chimba and Sisi.

Social Relations within the Lineage

429
604 Guardianship. Until he is old enough to work, the child is
[593] placed under the responsibility of the mother and, one step farther away, that of the eldest of his classificatory uncles. To a lesser degree all the uncles have authority over the child; guardianship is collective.

The custom of the Refugee Blacks, hostile to any division of the lineage, does not recognize any right peculiar to the mother's brothers (still, in fact, they seem to be consulted by
[584] preference about matters of small importance). For serious matters, such as authorizing a marriage, the classificatory uncles meet and deliberate; they do not vote, strictly speaking, but the proved opposition of three or four of them causes the project to be abandoned.

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[836] It is to the mother that people will come to complain about the child, and not to the father. She it is who decides to refer the thing to the uncles if it is serious (example of Doni, 18 years old, who deflowered Elina, 15 years old. Elina's mother came to complain to Doni's mother. Doni's mother went to notify her older brother Fintiman, who took the matter in hand).

582 /142 cont./
619 people who have lived there for a long time. They strike up
62 relationships with the people of Asisi, and that favors new unions. This explains the high proportion of unions between the women of this village and the Djuka (13 out of 75). On the contrary, almost no marriages to Djuka are observed in Papaïston village, where no Djukanhas settled permanently. /143/

584 The marriage proposal. The suitor is obliged to ask for the
613 assent of his own mother and his uncles (at the very least the
604 eldest of his classificatory uncles); in general he asks his father also.

604 If two of his classificatory uncles are expressly opposed, the plan must be abandoned. But there is no possible sanction for disobedience.

The suitor does not make the proposal himself; after making sure of the agreement of the girl he sends two persons, one of his uncles or brothers and one of his sisters in the classificatory sense.

These envoys speak to the woman's mother and uncles assembled together. If they agree, they go to ask for the assent of the head of the lineage. The men and women of the woman's lineage drink together a liter of tafia brought by the
969 envoys. Before drinking, the doyen of the lineage pours a little of it on the ground while invoking the ancestors, asking them to perpetuate the accord of the household and to grant them health and fecundity. This ceremony is made on the spot and they do not go to the fraga tiki, for they would be afraid to present themselves again at the fraga tiki in case of a break-up; prayer said anywhere in the village is not binding.

The two envoys, man and woman, play a very precise role. The man represents the postulant (it is a sort of marriage by proxy).

/143 cont./

585 613 The head of the lineage calls a classificatory sister of the girl. He takes her by the hand and leads her to the suitor's envoy, saying: "I give thee this woman."

Then he calls a classificatory brother of the girl. He leads him to the suitor's envoy, saying: "I give thee this man."

This second part of the ceremony is purely symbolic; there is no question at all that this man and this woman are marrying. Its purpose seems to be to show the perfect equality of the man and the woman in the marriage.

[969] The words pronounced in the invocation to the ancestors are: "We give (this) woman to (this) man; may they live together, may they not be sick, may they have children, children who live."

[584] There is no need for the assent of the woman's father.

585 If it is a question of the first marriage of a young girl, [583] the fiancé comes, aided by his friends, to build her a house. He builds her a boat and buys for her what is necessary for [429] domestic life. When the person who is bringing up the girl judges the time to be ripe, she gives her the pāŋgi, garment of married women, authorizing thus the consummation of the marriage.

[613] [969] The husband who built the house asks the elders of his wife's lineage to come in front of the house to throw tafia, to ask the ancestors that the couple be fecund and live a long time in this house.

584 613 Here, for example, is how the marriage proposal to Chitaïna (Aw.B.1, F43, Asisi village) by Déési (L1, F45, Loka village) proceeded in 1948.

To represent him Déési had sent his classificatory brother Tamu /144/ (L1, F32), older than he by about 15 years, and his classificatory aunt, Yaana (L1, E39). (See the genealogical table of the Lapé lineage.)

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584 613 The envoys, after making it known the evening before that they were coming, presented themselves at 10 o'clock in the morning in Asisi-Awara Bakka village. Present were Irma, Chitaïna's mother; Alémin (Aw.B.1, E40), actual uncle; Antonu (Aw.B.1, E47), one of the oldest of the classificatory uncles; Namu (Aw.B.1, E48), classificatory aunt; and the girl's brothers and sisters by the same mother.

Tamu took the floor, unfolding Déési's merits and stating that he had serious intentions. The eldest of the uncles declared 585 613 acceptance. Chitaïna having fled according to custom, he took her young sister Boomi, who was only five years old, by the hand and led her to Tamu, saying, "I give thee this woman." Then he took Abéni, Chitaïna's older brother, by the hand and led him to Yaana, saying, "I give thee this man."

[769] Next, tafia was poured on the ground while the ancestors were invoked in favor of the /new/ household.

The liter of tafia brought by Déési was shared symbolically in the evening among all the village inhabitants including the Afi lineage there.

585 431 For the installation of the household, since there was no more room near Irma's house to build another, the latter gave one of the two houses she possessed.

584 602 [595] Here is still another example concerning the two wives of Fintiman (Dju, F6, Boniville village).

For his first wife Mimi (K8, E156, Boniville) he sent his brother and sister by the same mother, Klémenti and Eliana, who approached Mimi's mother and her classificatory uncle Lébiman.

Fintiman had previously made sure of the agreement of his own father Malobi (Dip. I, E50), who had brought him up, of his mother Béniti, and of his uncle Diolè (Dju, E1), the eldest of the classificatory uncles.

/144 cont./

584 602 To ask for his second wife Bugi (Aw.B.1, F41, Asisi-Awara Bakka vge.) he had sent Dosu (Dip. I, E4, Boniville), his father Malobi's classificatory brother (although a very distant relative) and his younger sister by the same mother, Kulina, who made the marriage proposal to Bugi's mother and to her classificatory uncles Antonu and Mato.

582 178 [701] Age of marriage. In former times there was a very precise custom about this. Men were not authorized to marry before about 30 years of age, constituting until that age the immediately mobilizable armed force. Women were authorized by their mothers to marry only when they had reached complete physical development, or between 20 and 22 years. This was the safeguard of a society deprived of all medical help against obstetrical risk, particularly serious for very young women. When the fiancé had temporarily emigrated to earn his living, the marriage could be put off until the age of 25 years and more. [184] This late marriage of girls was still met with only a few years ago among the Djuka, more faithful to custom. There was on the average five to ten years of age difference between husband and wife. /145/

For about the past ten years, under the influence of the relaxation of family discipline, the marriage age has gone down considerably, as much for the man as for the woman. Nearly all the girls married during the last two years were from 15 to 17 years old. It can be stated that the average marriage age of girls is 16 years (1).

1. We are speaking here of the age at the time of the consummation of marriage.

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882 [858] Whereas little girls before puberty are left free to come and go, older girls are the object of constant surveillance. They are always under the surveillance of one of their near [883] relatives specifically designated. If they have permission to go dancing in another village, they must present themselves upon arrival to an uncle, an aunt, an older brother who will watch over them all evening.

Sometimes they build for a girl a little house where she sleeps alone ... but she is double-locked into it for the night.

[883] At nightfall, when their mothers are busy with the preparation of the meal, the girls are sent to get water or to angle for fish; there is wavering in the surveillance, and seducers know how to profit by it.

[593] [584] [582] Until recent times girls were held by their mothers in the bonds of a strict authority, and although engaged very young, they were not authorized to marry before reaching complete physical development.

584 It often used to happen that a girl might be promised by her mother to a man from her first years (they still say, although that is no longer practiced, pɔti mɔfu na umã, "to put his mouth on a girl," meaning by that to have received a promise of marriage). This plan always used to remain subject to the girl's assent when she grew up and did not constitute a contract, strictly speaking; it did not involve any payment or compensation whatever. [593] A girl could not be obligated to a marriage which was absolutely displeasing to her, but the mother's authority was great enough to make these marriages come about in most cases.

[431] If a girl had not been promised, the young man who wanted to marry her used to try to attract her attention during a dance and to exchange a few words with her. /147/ Later he would give her a paddle bearing symbols of fecundity and the representation of a house and a boat. If the girl accepted the paddle, he could propose to her officially.

/147 cont./

848 If the girl is pregnant, the man may not abandon her: that would make a great to-do between the two kin groups: he must stay with her at least until the birth of the child.

883 836 178 [582] Nowadays among the Boni things tend to happen completely otherwise than custom makes provision for. The general opinion is that girls can no longer be held down, that they escape more and more from the authority of their mothers; many of them begin to run wild at about 14 or 15, and people are obliged to marry them off precipitately at 15 or 16. It is difficult to say what the proportion of these hasty marriages is, but the recriminations heard on all sides on the subject of the shamelessness of girls give the idea that it is increasing. In the [582] villages on the French bank, out of nine girls married in 1958 [848] there were only four marriages concluded according to regulations; the five others had been arranged hastily either because the girl was pregnant (two cases) or because she had laid herself open to scandal. /148/

582 Nearly all girls married between 1952 and 1956 were 15 to 17 years old.

584 This is about how things happen:

A man who is attracted by a girl tries to exchange a few [537] words with her unknown to her mother. There are special forms for these declarations. One speaks in a low voice, very fast, using special formulas. This is how one of our boatmen, one evening in October, 1952, addressed young Lomé, age 15, of Boniville village, who had gotten away from her mother on the pretext of going to get water for us.

584 539 "Woman, I love thee, I wish to live with thee, I wish to marry thee. That which God put in me I cannot take away (1).

1. Which means: I cannot change, you must take me as I am.

/148 cont./

584 539 I do not know whether thou lovest me, whether thou wilt answer yes or no; perhaps I am not so handsome as thou, but I cannot help loving thee. If thou lovest me, tell me clearly. I have come, I have attached my boat to a rock, I have wet my feet before reaching land (2)."

2. High-flown words to which no precise meaning can be attached; it is a kind of verbal music whose formulas vary infinitely.

"Come back tomorrow, come back, I cannot answer thee today, I cannot."

"I know for today, but not for tomorrow (3); yield to me,

3. One must understand: It is necessary to decide today.

be mine, I shall give thee the garment (4)."

4. The man lays down one of his garments at the home of the woman who has agreed to marry him.

584 Our departure on our tour the next day put an end to his attempts for the time being!

836 584 [558] It often happens that the girl allows herself to be seduced; her mother soon learns of it from the village people. She flies into a passion, beats her daughter to obtain a confession without which she can obtain nothing from the supposed seducer. It is an extreme shame for a mother not to receive the price of her

/149 cont./

836 684 not done." He advises Doni above all to remit to the girl the payment of her akka, namely two camisas, a string of white beads which she will wear on her left wrist, and a bottle of syrup which she will offer to her akka while drinking it. Doni does not bother to face the mother and does not intend to see the girl again; it is his sister Maria who will attend to the errand.

That done, the mother will accept the fait accompli and will not show her anger. She will wait for the payment.

584 836 One also hears talk rather often of the clandestine consummation of a properly arranged marriage, the engaged couple wishing thus to force the hand of their guardians and obtain their freedom sooner.

587 Remarriage of widows or divorcées. It does not give rise to any payment, but the marriage proposal is made to the woman's uncles and the head of her lineage in the same form as for a girl. In such a case it is no longer a question of asking for an authorization (a man would have to have the worst reputation for the woman's lineage to refuse the marriage) but to obtain the benediction of the ancestors on the household. Moreover, it is (613) very important for the heads of both lineages to be notified of this marriage, for in case of the death of husband or wife the other will have to bear the weight of the mourning.

581 Women are guided in their choice by sensual attraction but largely also by self-interest. They take care to marry a man who has, as it is said among us, some future, a position. The owners of outboard motors do not fail to pass at reduced speed by the villages in order to be admired by the women.

Men who have a reputation for "working hard" (for work is the sole wealth in Boni country) are frequently chosen by girls even though they may have one or two wives already.

/156 cont./

586 The estimate of the average number of divorces for women
[128] born before 1896 is probably lower than the actual number, their first divorces not being well known to our informants. It is probably in the neighborhood of two.

586 The increase in frequency of divorces among young women
593 is striking. It is related to the weakening of the authority, very
178 strong in former times, exercised by mothers over their daughters.

Here are two examples concerning two girls we have known since their childhood.

836 Lomé (L2, F74, Boniville) born in 1938, began to cause people to talk about her in 1954. She was deflowered by N..., who did not want to marry her. Then she had relations with Asadam (K, Boniville), who did not want to marry her either. She was beaten; she continued to see him. Now this is extreme-
[558] ly shameful for a girl because it is placing herself in a state of inferiority with respect to a man, when her self-respect consists in making a contract between equals.

582 Her brother Amèmbé beat her, and she ended up by marrying Pitipiti (Aw.B.2, Asisi village), who formally asked
586 for her in marriage in 1956. This marriage lasted less than a
587 year. In 1957 Lomé divorced him to marry Djoni (Kotika village).

584 Aguba (D.u, G14), girl of Asisi-Dju village, born in 1941, had been proposed to with the customary formalities in May, 1956 by Païtiki (L2, Loka village), a young man of 18. It was
584 agreed that the engaged couple would wait two years. But
585 Païtiki did not wait and consummated the marriage clandestine-
[429] ly at the end of a few months. Lènga, Aguba's aunt and guardian, became very angry and beat her. She did not give her the pagi until May, 1957. The marriage lasted only a few
586 months. /157/ By the end of 1957 Aguba was breaking off with Païtiki and beginning openly to look for adventures.